



NEWS RELEASE

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Fort Riley and Junction City-Geary County Military Affairs Council Receive Honors From USDA Rural Development

Presentations Made During 'National Homeownership Month' Tour

Topeka, KS – USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks, during a visit today to Fort Riley, announced that Major General Dennis E. Hardy, Commanding General 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and Fort Riley, and Fort Riley Garrison Commander Colonel Ty Smith are both being honored by the Agency as its Kansas '2006 Special Homeownership Partner'. General Hardy and Colonel Smith's recognition by USDA Rural Development is a result of their partnership with the Agency supporting the USDA - Fort Riley Regional Initiative.

The Junction City-Geary County Military Affairs Council was also honored by USDA during the Agency's visit to the Post, as USDA's '2006 Outstanding Community Partner'. The award to the Council was in recognition of their extraordinary help promoting USDA's homeownership financing programs to the Soldiers and civilian personnel, and their families, under the Initiative. Sam Robinson, Director of the Council, accepted the USDA award.

"It's an outstanding partnership between Fort Riley and USDA Rural Development. From the signing of the historic Memorandum of Understanding between the two entities to the opening of the USDA Rural Development housing office at Fort Riley, cooperation has been outstanding. The Agency is providing important assistance to help both Soldiers and civilian homebuyers in the region. The expansion of Fort Riley will also provide communities in the region an excellent opportunity to expand affordable housing and enhance local infrastructure, and the Agency is committed to supporting this economic development," commented State Director Banks.

Colonel Smith remarked during today's award presentation, "This is an outstanding partnership to assist our Soldiers and families moving to the area. The Initiative is also supporting all the communities located in the region."

The USDA – Fort Riley Regional Initiative partnership, celebrating its one year anniversary this week, has produced significant benefits to the Soldiers and the new civilian workforce, particularly for first time homebuyers, giving them the capability for fulfilling the American dream owning their home and building their future. Since the beginning of 2006, over \$5 million in homeownership loans have been guaranteed or directly financed by USDA Rural Development in the Fort Riley area.

U.S. Senator Pat Roberts, commenting on today's presentations, said, "It is clear to anyone visiting the Fort, or the surrounding communities like Junction City and Manhattan, that BRAC decisions to bring thousands of men and women in uniform to our state is producing real and robust growth in the Ft. Riley region. These soldiers and their families are being ushered in by the USDA-Fort Riley Regional Initiative. The first of its kind and a model to other military installations facing rapid growth, the Regional Initiative is making a real difference to soldiers relocating to Fort Riley from around the world. By providing important housing assistance, the Regional Initiative is directly contributing to a better quality of life for our troops."

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USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that support increasing economic opportunities and enhancing the quality of life of rural Americans. As a venture capital entity, USDA Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America. During Fiscal Year 2005, USDA Rural Development delivered nearly \$235 million in community and economic development programming benefiting Kansas.

Additional information regarding USDA Rural Development's Fort Riley Regional Initiative can be obtained by contacting the Fort Riley office at 785-239-6473 or the Agency's Manhattan office at 785-776-7582 (extension #4). Individuals may also call the Agency's state headquarters at 785-271-2700 or log onto the state's Rural Development website at: www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks

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